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Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

During the period under review, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa held two meetings. The twenty-ninth and thirtieth ministerial meetings were held, respectively, in N'Djamena from 9 to 12 November 2009 and in Kinshasa from 26 to 30 April 2010. The Committee secretariat was comprised of members of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC).

During the period in question, the Committee continued to provide the Central African subregion with a space for dialogue and confidence-building among its 11 member States. It also discharged in an exemplary manner its duty to deliberate on relevant topics and to adopt specific measures that contribute to peace, security, disarmament and non-proliferation.

In addition to the topics that the Committee has traditionally considered, including a review of the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa, the status of inter-State cooperation and the implementation of disarmament and arms limitation programmes, new topics consistent with the latest developments in the subregion were also addressed.

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The Committee continued its discussions of the draft legal instrument that had been prepared at its request by UNREC, and at the thirtieth ministerial meeting it adopted the Central African Convention on the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair or Assembly (Kinshasa Convention). The Kinshasa Convention represents a major step forward for the subregion. It fills a void that had left Central Africa one of the few subregions of Africa not to have a legally binding instrument on that issue. The Committee decided that the Kinshasa Convention would be open for signature at its thirty-first ministerial meeting. It also expressed its deep gratitude to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNREC for their excellent work.

For the first time, the Committee discussed the renewed outbreak of acts of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Owing to the technical nature of the subject, the Committee asked the Office for Disarmament Affairs to bring to its attention during forthcoming meetings any initiative undertaken in other regions, together with all relevant information on combating maritime piracy.

The Committee also initiated a new discussion, based on specific recommendations, of the link between women, peace and security in the subregion. The member States adopted short- and medium-term measures to facilitate their contribution to the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) to take place in New York in October 2010.

The Committee also enabled the United Nations peacekeeping missions and offices in Central Africa to take a subregional approach to their exchanges with host countries and other States members of the Committee. The Committee decided to include an item on information on these peacekeeping missions and offices in its agenda for all ministerial meetings.

With respect to the support required from member States to ensure the Committee's functioning, the Committee considered the implementation of the Libreville Declaration, which stresses the need for all member States to make voluntary financial contributions to the Trust Fund for the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. The Committee has set a minimum contribution and several member States have already paid in their contributions. The Committee decided to review its financial situation at its next ministerial meeting.

Overall, during the period under review, the Committee continued to contribute to peace and security in Central Africa by providing the 11 States of the subregion with a forum for consultation and for the negotiation of political and legal instruments specific to the subregion.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 64/61, entitled "Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa", the General Assembly reaffirmed its support for efforts aimed at promoting confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels in order to ease tensions and conflicts in Central Africa and to further peace, stability and sustainable development in the subregion.

2. In that same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the assistance that States members of the Standing Advisory Committee needed to ensure the success of their biannual meetings and to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session a report on the implementation of the resolution.

3. The present report is submitted in response to that request. It covers the activities undertaken by the Committee from July 2009 to June 2010.

II. Activities of the Standing Advisory Committee

4. The twenty-ninth ministerial meeting was held in N'Djamena from 9 to 12 November 2009. The thirtieth ministerial meeting was held in Kinshasa from 26 to 30 April 2010. Both meetings were attended by the 11 States members of the Committee: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe.

5. For both meetings, the Committee secretariat was comprised of members of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC), under the Office of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. Various issues were addressed during these meetings, including:

(a) The legal instrument on the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa, and the plan for its implementation;

(b) The implementation of the Brazzaville Programme of Priority Activities (proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and disarmament of the civilian population) adopted in 2003;

(c) Recent developments in disarmament and non-proliferation presented by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs;

(d) The geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa;

(e) Maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea;

(f) The link between "women, peace and security" and the implementation by the Central African States of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and other relevant resolutions;

(g) Implementation by the Central African States of the Libreville Declaration on the funding of the Committee's activities;

(h) The Fourth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

6. Representatives from the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF), the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) also attended the meetings, as did the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in the Central African Republic (United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA)); in the Central African Republic and in Chad (United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT)); and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC)). Two other United Nations agencies were also represented: the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

7. The participation of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and other senior United Nations officials in the twenty-ninth and thirtieth ministerial meetings made it possible for peacekeeping missions and offices of the United Nations in Central Africa to take a subregional approach to their exchanges with States and other stakeholders in Central Africa. In order to maintain these types of exchange, the Committee decided to include an item on information on peacekeeping missions and offices in its agenda for all future meetings.

A. Development and adoption of the Kinshasa Convention

8. The Committee enabled member States to continue their discussions and adopt a legal instrument to control small arms and light weapons in Central Africa. The drafting process was entrusted to UNREC and was carried out in several stages.

9. The Regional Centre prepared a first draft of the legal instrument and then refined it, drawing on feedback from a group of independent African and international experts.[1] The revised draft legal instrument was considered on first reading at the twenty-ninth ministerial meeting of the Committee in N'Djamena. Upon completion of their work, member States decided to hold in-depth national consultations on the draft legal instrument and send their comments to UNREC.

10. UNREC prepared a new version of the document, based on recommendations submitted by member States and incorporated the comments of a second group of independent experts.[2] The thirtieth ministerial meeting of the Committee, in Kinshasa, was devoted to the review of and negotiations on the revised draft legal instrument. After further negotiations on the document, member States unanimously adopted the Central African Convention on the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair or Assembly (Kinshasa Convention). The Committee decided that the Kinshasa Convention would be open for signature by member States at its

[1] UNREC organized a first meeting of independent experts on 2 and 3 October 2009 in Lomé. The dozen or so African and international experts were selected on the basis of their proven expertise in issues of small arms and light weapons and also, in some cases, for their knowledge of the Central African subregion.

[2] UNREC convened a second group of independent experts on 12 and 13 March 2010 in Nairobi.

thirty-first ministerial meeting. The Committee also thanked the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, including UNREC, for their excellent work and Austria for its financial support.

11. Furthermore, in accordance with the methodology adopted at the Committee's twenty-fifth ministerial meeting, the drafting of the Convention and the drafting of the plan of implementation were conducted simultaneously.

12. At the thirtieth ministerial meeting of the Committee, a draft plan of implementation was submitted to member States. At the close of that meeting, they decided to hold national consultations before the end of July 2010, after which relevant recommendations would be communicated to UNREC for the drafting process and adoption. The Committee decided that the revised draft plan of implementation would be discussed at the thirty-first ministerial meeting.

13. The Kinshasa Convention clearly represents a major step forward for the subregion. It fills a void that had left Central Africa one of the few subregions of Africa not to have a legally binding instrument combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The Convention consists of a preamble and nine chapters reflecting the latest developments in the regulation of the trade in small arms and light weapons and the fight against trafficking. It also takes into account the legal, political, institutional and cultural specificities and the security needs of its 11 member States.

14. The direct involvement of ministers in the development and adoption of the Kinshasa Convention strengthens its importance and constitutes a significant step towards a coherent subregional strategy to combat illicit arms and ammunition.

15. Although Rwanda has withdrawn from the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the fact that it joined the remaining members of the Committee in adopting the Convention demonstrates once more the role played by the Committee as a mechanism for confidence-building and as a forum uniting 11 States that share long and porous borders, vulnerable to any kind of traffic.

16. Moreover, the involvement of the many African and international experts in the drafting process made it possible to benefit from lessons learned in preparing and implementing similar legal instruments. The approach adopted involved a strategy promoting the exchange of experiences between different subregions, which was facilitated by the African Union through its Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons, in which UNREC participates as a representative of the United Nations system. Member States thus demonstrated their determination to maintain an approach based on inclusiveness and strengthened subregional cooperation.

17. The Secretary-General has, therefore, welcomed the adoption of the Kinshasa Convention, which marks an important step and will help reduce violence and bring undeniable peace and security dividends for States of the region.

B. Implementation of the Brazzaville Programme of Priority Activities

18. The Committee adopted the Programme of Priority Activities of Central Africa on 14 May 2003 in Brazzaville following the adoption in July 2001 of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. By adopting the Brazzaville

Programme of Priority Activities, which is a subregional plan for the implementation in Central Africa of the United Nations Programme of Action, States have pledged to take concrete institutional, normative and operational measures to combat illicit small arms and light weapons in the subregion.

19. In accordance with established practice, States have begun an inventory of national actions to implement the Brazzaville Programme of Priority Activities. When discussing this subject, they agreed on the importance of establishing national commissions and/or strengthening them to make them operational. They also agreed to revise or update their national laws on the subject and to intensify their advocacy and sensitization campaigns in communities to inform people of the dangers associated with small arms and light weapons. Member States should also intensify their cooperation in the areas of arms brokering and arms tracing and strengthen national capacities for the management and security of stockpiles.

C. Information from the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

20. At the request of the Committee, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to bring to the attention of member States the latest developments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. In that context, the Committee took note of the holding in New York on 24 September 2009 of the summit meeting of the Security Council on non-proliferation and disarmament, chaired by the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, and the regional workshop on Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) held in Egypt from 7 to 10 December 2009. In that regard, the Committee recommended that the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) organize a subregional workshop on the implementation of that resolution in Central Africa for the benefit of member States of the Standing Advisory Committee.

21. The Committee also welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the link between armed violence and development (A/64/228). In addition, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs informed States of the entry into force on 15 July 2009 of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Pelindaba Treaty). The Committee welcomed the fact that the entry into force of that important disarmament treaty had been facilitated by the ratification by one of its members, namely, Burundi. It encouraged States that had not yet ratified the Pelindaba Treaty to do so as soon as possible, as the Treaty would provide undeniable dividends in peace and security and in the field of economic development.

D. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa

22. The member States of the Committee welcomed the role it played in improving diplomatic relations, especially through the nomination and accreditation of ambassadors, the opening of diplomatic missions and, in the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda, the relaunching of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries.

23. Strictly from a security standpoint, dangers and threats of many kinds continued to compromise what States were doing to guarantee peace and stability in central Africa. At the initiative of Cameroon, the States of the subregion continued to discuss and share their concerns regarding extortion by persons cutting off road

access and other transborder crimes. A certain number of security measures that had come out of inter-State cooperation were also discussed. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic took advantage of the Committee's meetings to focus on the joint operations they are conducting with Uganda to fight the armed rebellion of the Lord's Resistance Army, responsible for committing abuses in the south-eastern Central African Republic. Similarly, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola are continuing to work together on a negotiated solution to the migration problem both countries have. The two have also set up a joint security and defence committee which deals, among other questions, with the flow of migrants between them.

E. Maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

24. At its twenty-ninth ministerial meeting, the Committee considered the question of the renewed outbreak of acts of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. In that connection, it asked the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs to help it and bring to its attention any initiative undertaken in other regions, together with all relevant information on combating maritime piracy during forthcoming meetings. The Committee expressed concern at the direct threat to peace and stability in Central Africa represented by maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and strongly condemned it.

25. The Committee welcomed the creation of the executive secretariat of the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea; the establishment of the Centre régional de sécurisation maritime de l'Afrique centrale (CRESMAC); the launching of the first joint patrols pursuant to the maritime security operation plan (SECMAR); the start of operations of the multinational coordination centre; the establishment of the mechanism for financing the Gulf of Guinea security strategy; and the plan to hold an international maritime conference in the near future, under the auspices of ECCAS and the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea.

26. The Committee took note of the ongoing number of initiatives, both national and subregional, aimed at effectively combating the phenomenon of maritime piracy and undertook to support them. It also asked to be kept informed of the progress achieved in implementing the Yaoundé Agreement of 6 May 2009 regarding the securing of the vital maritime interests of the ECCAS States and zone D of the Gulf of Guinea, comprising Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe.

F. The link between "women, peace and security" and the implementation by the Central African States of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and other relevant resolutions

27. At the suggestion of the Gabonese Chairman of the twenty-ninth ministerial meeting, the Committee discussed the link between women, peace and security in Central Africa. The discussion was in preparation for the tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

28. In that context, the Committee decided to take the following measures as soon as possible:

- The designation by each member State of a focal point on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) from among the ministries responsible for matters of peace and security, including ministries of foreign affairs, of the interior or of security, and of defence;
- The inclusion of women in the delegations of member States taking part in international and regional conferences on disarmament;
- The inclusion of women in national commissions to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons; and
- The regular drafting and submission of annual reports on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

29. The States also undertook to take account of the special situation of women when they combated armed violence, including their action to eradicate the trafficking of small arms and light weapons. In addition, member States reaffirmed the validity and crucial importance for the subregion of the Security Council resolutions on that issue; and they reiterated the imperative need to increase the protection of women during armed conflicts and to punish the perpetrators of sexual crimes. The States undertook to adopt measures aimed at preventing and punishing acts of sexual violence, specifically when used as a weapon of war to humiliate, dominate, intimidate, disperse or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or an ethnic group. They also decided to incorporate a gender perspective in national training programmes for defence and security forces.

30. Lastly, the Committee decided to include an item in the agenda of each of its ministerial meetings on the implementation by its member States of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and other relevant resolutions — 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) — given their significance for the Central African subregion.

G. Implementation of the Libreville Declaration

31. The Committee considered the implementation of the Libreville Declaration adopted at the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting. The Libreville Declaration stresses the need for all member States to make voluntary financial contributions to the Trust Fund for the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

32. The member States reaffirmed the value of the Committee and recommitted themselves to implementing the Libreville Declaration. Its implementation helps to ensure the financial stability required for the optimal functioning of the Committee. In that respect, the Secretary-General thanks Angola, Cameroon and the Congo for their contributions and strongly encourages other States to follow their example. He also thanks the Democratic Republic of the Congo and France for their financial contributions to the subregional thematic meeting on small arms (see section H below).

33. The Committee will continue to review its financial situation during forthcoming ministerial meetings.

H. Regional preparatory meeting for the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms

34. In response to a request made by the Committee at its twenty-ninth meeting, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs organized a thematic subregional meeting in Kinshasa on 24 and 25 April 2010 on the implementation in Central Africa of the Programme of Action on Small Arms. The meeting, which was organized in cooperation with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and with financial support from France, was held in preparation for the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms convened from 14 to 18 June 2010 in New York. The Committee's goal was, firstly, to prepare the message from its member States for the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms and, secondly, to evaluate the measures taken individually and collectively in the Central African subregion.

35. Upon completion of its deliberations, the Committee recommended that an explicit link should be made between security and development so that the issue of the supply of and demand for small arms and light weapons would be incorporated into national development strategies. It stressed the need to establish national structures for the coordination of activities and the exchange of information, in line with the recommendations of the Programme of Action on Small Arms. The Committee also called for enhanced cooperation among the Central African States and among the various subregions of Africa, and requested increased international assistance, including from arms-exporting countries.

36. The Committee welcomed the meeting of the Security Council held on 19 March 2010 under the presidency of Gabon. The subject of the meeting was the impact of illicit arms trafficking on peace and security in Central Africa and had two principal objectives.

37. The first objective was to bring before the Security Council the issue of illicit arms trafficking in Central Africa and to seek solutions. The second objective was to discuss ways of strengthening the activities set out in the Programme of Action on Small Arms and to reaffirm the value of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

38. The Committee encouraged the African States members of the Security Council to ensure that the Council remains seized of the issues raised at the meeting convened by the Gabonese presidency. It also took note of the themes planned for the Fourth Biennial Meeting, namely, border control, assistance and cooperation, the International Tracing Instrument, institutional issues, dialogue and a culture of peace, and other matters.

III. Administrative and financial matters

39. At the end of 2009, the Committee's Trust Fund had a balance of US$ 9,553. During the period from 1 January to 30 June 2010, contributions totalling $19,299.39 were received.

40. The Secretary-General reiterates his appeal to Member States, in particular States members of the Committee, and to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to contribute to the Trust Fund in order to enable the Committee to discharge effectively its mission of assisting the States of the subregion.

IV. Conclusions and observations

41. **During the period under review, the 11 States members of the Committee discussed long-standing as well as emerging issues in the subregion. The Secretary-General welcomes the fact that the discussions yielded specific measures that will contribute to peace, security, disarmament and non-proliferation. The two meetings convened by the Committee continued to provide member States with a space for dialogue and consultation. During the period under review, the Committee also enabled its 11 member States to draft and negotiate political and legal instruments specific to the subregion.**

42. **The 11 member States continued to consider topics that have traditionally been on the agenda of the Committee's ministerial meetings. These include a review of the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa, the status of inter-State cooperation and the implementation of disarmament and arms limitation programmes.**

43. **The Committee drafted and adopted the Central African Convention on the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition, and Parts and Components that can be used for their Manufacture, Repair or Assembly (Kinshasa Convention). The Convention represents a major step forward for the subregion, which did not yet have a legally binding instrument on that issue.**

44. **The Committee also considered new issues: maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, cross-border crime, the link between women, peace and security, and the need to act as soon as possible to improve security in Central Africa.**

45. **The Committee invited high-level officials and representatives from United Nations peacekeeping missions and offices in Central Africa to speak on issues of common interest. The Secretary-General welcomes these interactive discussions, which enhance dialogue and cooperation between United Nations missions and their host countries.**

46. **The Central African States have maintained their commitment to making voluntary financial contributions to the Committee's Trust Fund, in implementation of the Libreville Declaration.**

47. **The Secretary-General once again thanks Angola, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, France and the Congo for their contributions. He also thanks Austria for its support in the process of drafting and negotiating the Kinshasa Convention. He calls upon all Member States, particularly the States members of the Committee, to contribute to the Committee's Trust Fund. Lastly, the Secretary-General welcomes the role played by the Committee in enhancing regional confidence-building.**

Annex

Financial situation of the Trust Fund for the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa for 2009

	(United States dollars)
Opening balance (31 December 2008)	20 651
Income received (1 January-31 December 2009)	
Voluntary contributions	0
Funds received under inter-organizational arrangements	0
Interest income	394
Miscellaneous and other income	146
Subtotal	**21 191**
Expenditure (1 January-31 December 2009)	10 299
Programme support costs	1 339
Subtotal	**11 638**
Prior-period adjustments	0
Reserves and closing balance (31 December 2009)	**9 553**

Note: This information is based on income and expenditure for 2009. During the period from 1 January to 30 June 2010, contributions totalling $19,299.39 were received from Angola ($10,000) and Congo ($9,299.39).